

# Streamwalks for the Rondout Creek

Rosendale CCE  
Save the Rondout  
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**RIVERKEEPER.**  
NY's clean water advocates



# Streamwalks for the Rondout Creek

**Sources**

**Purpose**

**Methods**

# Sources for this talk

- Lower Hudson Council of Conservation Districts  
Streamwalk Method
- Center for Watershed Protection's Illicit Discharge  
Tracking Guide
  
- Jen Epstein, Riverkeeper
- John Gephards, Quassaick Creek Watershed Alliance
- Emily Vail, NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program
- Martha Cheo, formerly of Hudson River Basin Watch
- Carolyn Klocker, Cornell Coop. Ext - Dutchess
- Dan Troge, Fishkill Creek Watershed Committee
- Gary Capella, Ulster SCWD
- Amanda LaValle, Ulster Dept of Environment
- Beth Roessler, NYS DEC HREP Trees for Tribs

## **Streamwalk Methods Available**

- Lower Hudson Council of Conservation Districts Streamwalk Method – Survey sheet
- NYS Council of Trout Unlimited Visual Stream Assessment Protocol
- NRCS Stream Visual Assessment Protocol
- Center for Watershed Protection's IDDE manual

## **Reports Available**

Hunns Lake Stream Walk Report

Fishkill Creek Stream Walk Report

Quassaick Creek stream walks – multiple reports

# Streamwalk as Citizen Patrol

A neighborhood watch for the Rondout Creek

“The greatest impact you have is not in the number of tickets you write, or the number of people you arrest, but in the being visible while on patrol – your omnipresence is a powerful deterrent.”

-- Lesson from NYS Trooper Academy (paraphrase)



Sources  
Purpose  
Methods

# What is a Streamwalk?

A **visual inspection** of a waterway with the purpose of documenting:

**Current conditions** (riparian land use, bank condition, location of pipes and culverts, areas of erosion and sedimentation)

**Problems** (pipe discharges, stormwater outfalls, erosion, manure, litter, etc.)

It may be a **general survey** to define conditions, or a **site assessment** to investigate a specific issues.

# Why bother?

- Build relationships with landowners
- Build relationships with regulatory, enforcement and other professionals in government
- Get to know the creek – establish a baseline
- Identify, report and solve immediate pollution problems
- Identify problems in need of further investigation/action
- Assist your municipalities in MS4 outfall inspections
- Create public awareness – a deterrent



# Streamwalks for the Rondout Creek

A scenic view of the Rondout Creek. The water is a brownish-green color, and there are several large rocks scattered throughout. In the background, there is a dense forest of green trees. Three people are swimming in the water, creating a splash. The text 'Streamwalks for the Rondout Creek' is overlaid on the image in white. Below it, the words 'Sources', 'Purpose', and 'Methods: Before the Walk' are listed in white and yellow text.

Sources

Purpose

Methods: Before the Walk

# Before the Walk

1. Obtain permission from and invite landowners
2. ID relevant professional contacts
3. Review available information
4. Determine segments
5. Develop survey form
6. Media outreach
7. Gather necessary materials

# Obtain Landowner Permission

**Walking:** Under § 140.05 of the New York Penal Law, “[a] person is guilty of trespass when he knowingly enters or remains unlawfully in or upon premises.”

**Boating:** Public navigation is lawful on non-tidal waterways that have or had the capacity for trade or travel; “the courts have held that it is a public nuisance for a landowner to obstruct, annoy, or hinder the public right of navigation on such waters... However, the public right of navigation does not include intrusion on private property except as necessary for safe water passage.”

– DEC OGC 9: Enforcement Guidance for Public Rights of Navigation and Fishing

# Obtain Landowner Permission

- Avoid trespass
- Meet allies
- Develop list of all waterfront property owners (ask for contact information when you seek permission)
- Notification is a deterrent

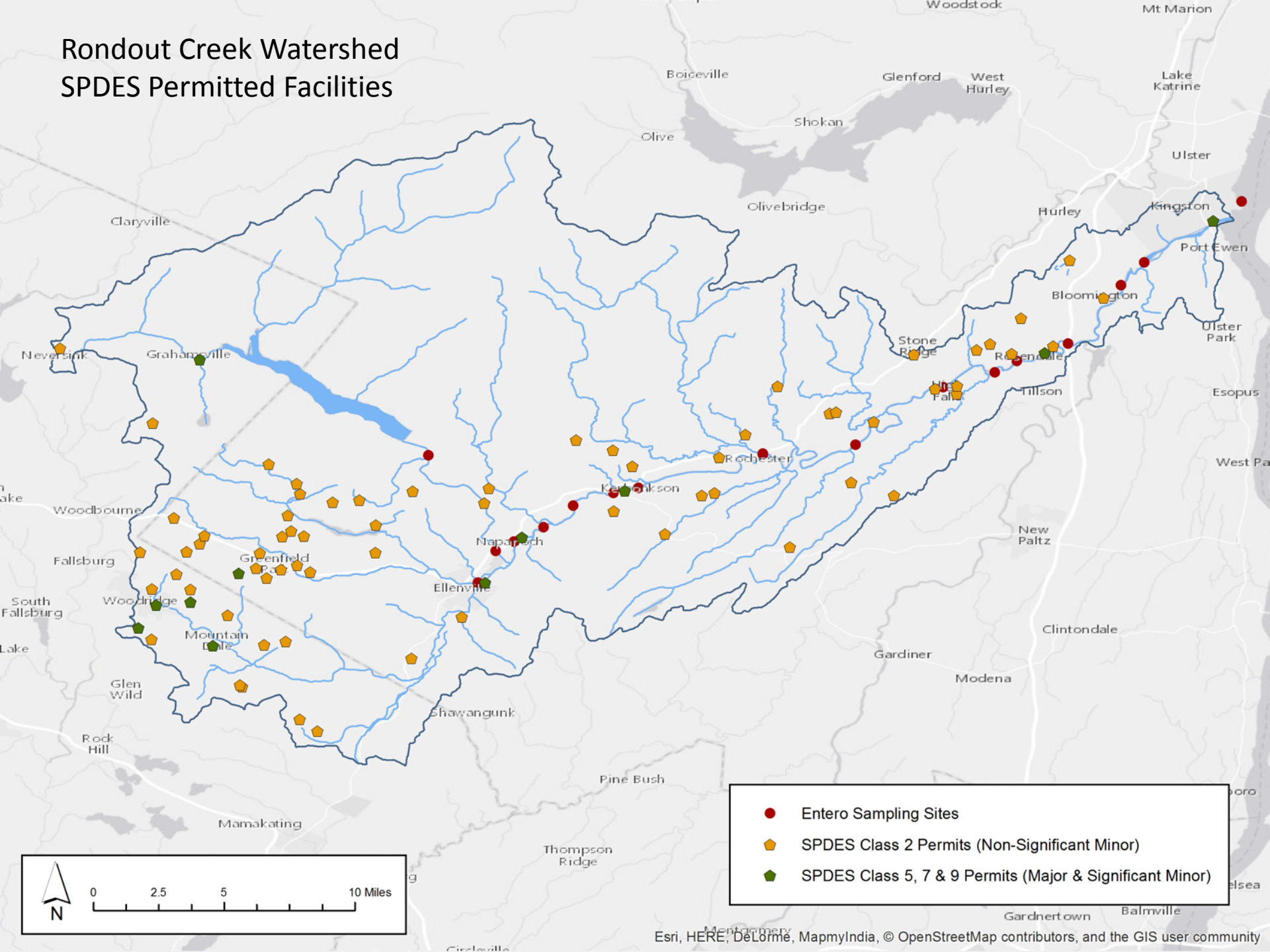
# Relevant Professional Contacts

- **DEC** – pollution violations
- **Riverkeeper** – enforcement followup
- **Ulster Enviro Dept., Towns** – MS4
- **DOH** – septics
- **SWCD** – streambank erosion
- **DEC Trees for Tribs** – planting opportunities

# Review Available Information

- Rondout Creek Watershed Management Plan
- Ulster Parcel Viewer  
(<http://ulstercountyny.gov/maps/parcel-viewer/>)
- SPDES permits - Riverkeeper
- MS4 outfalls – Hudson River Watershed Alliance  
(<http://crreo.newpaltz.edu/ms4/>), Ulster Dept. of Environment, municipalities
- MS4 Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE) plans
- Town insurance policies

# Rondout Creek Watershed SPDES Permitted Facilities





## Ulster County MS4 Outfalls

This map of MS4 Outfalls is made using Google Fusion Tables.

Select the parameters of your search below, and the site will parse the dataset for outfalls that match you criteria.

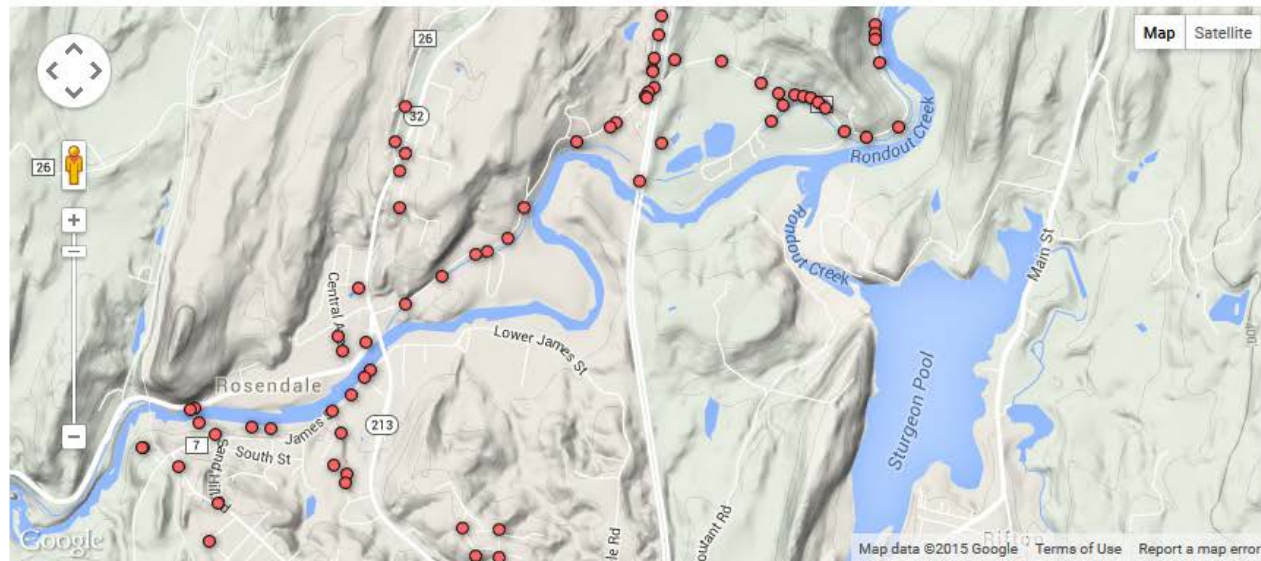
The checkboxes below toggle overlays on and off. Please give them a little bit of time to load.

### Search for Address

### Search By Outfall ID

### Search By MS4 Permit

### Search By Outfall Type





# Determine Segments

- Fishkill Creek Watershed Council generally walked ~1 mile per afternoon, in groups of 2-6 per segment
- Rondout is ~41 miles long (Reservoir to Hudson)
- Distance between Entero sampling points ranges from <1 mile to ~6 miles. Many are ~1.5 miles apart.
- Many tributaries (Sandburg, Cottekill, Rochester & Kripplebush creeks; Beer & Ver Nooy kills; Wallkill River and others)

# Determine Segments

- “The main tributary that requires further investigation is the Sandburg Creek” – Rondout mgmnt plan, 2010
- Entero Counts (GM) generally increase between
  - Reservoir and Napanoch
  - the prison and Foordmoore Road
  - High Falls and AJ Snyder Field
  - Thruway crossing and Eddyville
- Optical brightener data indicates there’s a likelihood that domestic sources of fecal matter are influencing at least two sampling locations:
  - Tillson/NYS Thruway Crossing
  - Kerhonkson-42<sup>nd</sup> St Bridge

# Develop Your Survey Sheet

- **Basics** - Date, time, weather, prior rain, segment, lat/long, landmarks
- **Photos (and Video)!**
- **Outfalls** – ID, check signs, describe outfall, document any “floatables” or evidence of wastes
- **Land Use & Bank conditions** – riparian buffer coverage, erosion, construction impacts
- **Stream conditions** – sedimentation, turbidity, discoloration, algae, odor
- **Animal evidence** – waterfowl, dog waste, etc.

# Press Outreach

- **Think broadly** – print, TV, radio, online; local and regional
- **Photo Op** – This is a highly visual activity, a plus for news organizations
- **What makes it newsworthy?** Volunteers from multiple towns launch a citizen patrol of the Rondout Creek to identify problems and solutions in the largest tributary of the tidal Hudson River.

A red arch bridge spans across a river. The bridge has a prominent arch structure with vertical supports. Below the bridge, several people are kayaking on the water. A white boat is also visible in the river. The background shows a lush green forest and a blue sky with scattered clouds. The water reflects the bridge and the surrounding environment.

# Streamwalks for the Rondout Creek

Sources

Purpose

**Methods: During the Walk**

# During the Walk

1. Fill out survey and take detailed notes
2. Take lots of photos
3. Report immediate problems
4. Take Entero and/or optical brightener samples?

# Some Possible Signs of Pollution

- **Certain pipe discharges** such as dry-weather flow from storm sewer outfalls (except buried streams), outfalls that don't appear on MS4 or SPDES maps or outfalls with evidence of sanitary wastes
- **Water discoloration** – brown, muddy, cloudy, films and sheens
- **Dumping** – garbage, fill, construction debris
- **Odors** – sewage, chemicals, petroleum
- **Excessive vegetation growth** – algae in water or green grass over failing septic fields

# What to Include in a Pollution Report

- Photos (close up and for context)
- Description
- Weather conditions
- Time and date
- Precise location

**Don't delay too long; timely reports are often key.  
But thorough reports are preferable – and  
frivolous reports should always be avoided.**



# Program These Into Your Phones Now

**DEC Pollution Tip Line:** 1-800-TIPP DEC (1-800-847-7332)

**DEC Police Dispatch:** 877-457-5680

**Riverkeeper Pollution Tip Line:** 914-478-4501 ext 231

Send reports to [watchdog@riverkeeper.org](mailto:watchdog@riverkeeper.org)

# Identify Opportunities for Action

With willing landowners interested:

**Erosion** – Soil & Water Conservation District offers free advice and planning to landowners, but project are at landowner expense; some farms may qualify for grant funding

**Stream bank planting** – DEC Trees for Tribs provides free trees and shrubs, plans and assistance for planting on stream banks with no or few trees/shrubs

Document opportunities with photos and specific site description, and discuss with both landowner and state/county agencies

# Water Quality Sampling

Sample at point of entry, at a set number of stormwater outfalls, at potential problem sites? How many?

Logistics are a challenge – driving samples, accessing driver, timing, patrol boat (lab) schedule

# Streamwalks for the Rondout Creek

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**Methods: After the Walk**



# After the Walk

1. Additional press outreach?
2. Organize data
3. Followup (sites in need of additional investigation, connecting landowners to resources, etc.)
4. Report on results

# Good Luck On Patrol!



[www.riverkeeper.org/water-quality](http://www.riverkeeper.org/water-quality)  
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